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UNCLAS ACCRA 002138

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INL PASS TO ERENI ROESS / LAGOS PASS TO CLAYTON WHEELER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SNAR GH](#) [CACCS](#)

SUBJECT: SIX SENTENCED IN GHANA'S LARGEST DRUG SMUGGLING CASE

REF: A. A) ACCRA 00051

[1](#)B. B) 03 ACCRA 1976 C) 03 ACCRA 2480

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. On October 27, six men who were convicted in a high-profile drug trafficking case in Ghana were sentenced to twenty years each in prison. Among the six is Kevin Gorman, a UK-US dual national, whom the judge described as "the wheel around which all activities revolved." Sentencing came after months of court battles, which ultimately ended at the High Court. The Executive Secretary of the Ghana Narcotics Control Board, the agency chiefly responsible for making the arrest, was satisfied with the outcome. End summary.

SIX MONTHS OF COURT BATTLES REACHES A CLIMAX

[1](#)2. On January 7, 2004, the Ghana Narcotics Control Board (NCB) and the Ghana Police Service Drug Enforcement Unit (DEU) intercepted 588.33 kilograms of cocaine in Ghana's largest ever drug bust (see reftel A). The raid was possible due to the aid of INL surveillance equipment donated in 2003, as well as UK intelligence.

[1](#)3. A lower court initially granted the suspects bail, which caused public outcry. Press reports at the time claimed that the suspects were being treated favorably because five of them were foreign nationals. The suspects were then remanded to a medium security prison when the case was sent to the High Court for deliberation. All six suspects pleaded not guilty to a range of charges, which included engaging in criminal conspiracy to commit a drug-related offense, possession of illegal narcotics, importing narcotic drugs without license from the Ministry of Health, and using property for keeping narcotic drugs.

[1](#)4. On October 27, the presiding judge, Justice F. Kusi-Appiah, delivered the sentence in a 50-page verdict which took two and a quarter hours to read. Each of the six suspects were sentenced to 20 years on each count to run concurrently (Note: the minimum sentence for the charges is 10 years each). The court also ordered that currencies seized from the accused persons - US\$18,841, 1,150 British pounds, 9,485 euros, 442 Venezuelan dollars, 40 Thai baht, 10 Swiss francs, and 4.2 million Ghanaian cedis - be deposited into a government account.

[1](#)5. Kevin Gorman, named as the operation's ringleader, is a UK national who also possesses an American passport. The British High Commission told the Consular section on October 29th that they believe he was previously married to an American citizen. Mr. Gorman has not requested American consular services throughout the case's proceedings and has instead received, and continues to receive, services from the British HC in Accra.

COMMENT

[1](#)6. This case was the lead story in Ghanaian newspapers on October 28. That this high-profile case involving five foreign nationals resulted in such a stiff penalty is widely regarded here as a success for both counter-narcotics authorities and the judiciary in Ghana. The Executive Secretary of the Narcotics Control Board, Colonel Isaac

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Akuoko, told PolOff that he is "very satisfied and happy" with the outcome of this trial. The court's decision will hopefully strengthen existing efforts by counter-narcotic agencies here in Ghana, as well as discourage attempts by illegal smugglers to open up new routes through West Africa. It further reinforces the need for continued USG assistance in fighting the flow of illegal drugs into and through the region. Meanwhile, the counter-narcotics effort continues as a 4-week, INL-funded, interagency training aimed at stopping the smuggling of drugs through Ghana's seaports and airports

was launched on October 18th. This training also garnered
prolific local press coverage. End comment.
YATES